

Unleashing the Entrepreneur in Every Woman


“We believe that everyone is an entrepreneur,” said Takunda Chingonzoh, a 2014 Mandela Washington Fellow and YALI Network member. “It’s only a matter of people finding that aspect of themselves.”

Recently, Chingonzoh and his team focused on helping one particular group find that aspect of themselves: women. They did it through their organization Neolab Technology.

Founded in 2012, Neolab began with a goal to develop technology fit for Africa. It has since grown into “a startup factory.” The Neolab team recruits university students, trains them in entrepreneurship and forms them into teams. The teams work together to transform their ideas into sustainable enterprises.

This year, Neolab launched its first training course exclusively for women.

Moments of Inspiration

University students participate in a  focus group as part of an “unconference” hosted by Neolab Technology.

The inspiration for such a course began in the United States while Chingonzoh was participating in the Mandela Washington Fellowship. During class discussions, he observed that comments from the male Fellows relied more on generic knowledge while those from the female Fellows revealed a deep connectedness to the community.

“That was the initial spark,” Chingonzoh said.

That spark ignited when Chingonzoh witnessed speeches from National Security Advisor Susan Rice, Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield and first lady Michelle Obama.

“I could see the kind of energy, the kind of presence they commanded and how it affected people,” Chingonzoh said. “It was inspiring.”

Through these experiences, Chingonzoh came to understand the roles women can play in leadership and technology and the valuable perspective they offer.

“I had been exposed to women in technology who were doing amazing things,” Chingonzoh said. “So my question was ‘How do you activate that same kind of drive in the women that we have in our societies?’”

Training Exclusively for Women

Chingonzoh interviews President Obama 

during the 2014 U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit.


For Chingonzoh and the Neolab team, the answer rested with providing a training class exclusively for women. They recruited 12 women from the local university and ran them through their standard seven-week training curriculum, which they call “Model X.”

The first part of Model X focuses on “activating the entrepreneur,” Chingonzoh explained. The second part hones more conventional skills such as idea validation and team building.

For the women-only training, however, Neolab had to add an additional training element to its curriculum: confidence building.

“They would talk about these great ideas,” Chingonzoh said, “but they would not have the confidence to push them across.”

Gender Differences

Five Model X participants work together  on a finance management and literacy application.

In addition to their lack of confidence, Chingonzoh noticed another characteristic that set these women apart. They wanted to solve problems. They didn’t want to create the next Facebook; they wanted to develop sustainable solutions that would help people and communities.

These women also displayed a dedication and tenacity Chingonzoh had not seen before.

“In the first class, you’re the one asking people to do this, this and this. With the women, by the third or fourth class, they’re the ones asking ‘What’s next? What can we do? How do we do this?’” Chingonzoh said. “They were taking the course with way more vigor and more drive than we had seen in previous classes.”

For Chingonzoh and his team, the results of this women-only training have been both “amazing” and transformative. Neolab has not only decided to host a women-only training course every year, but also to shake up the gender balance of its training team. Chingonzoh said it’s important for the women being trained to see other women in leadership roles. He believes this will provide them with a person whom they can relate to and will also boost their self-confidence.

“It’s really important to publicize and celebrate the women that we have in our networks who are doing all these incredible and amazing things, because that in itself serves as a way to activate even more women and even more girls to break out and lift up their communities,”


he said.

To learn more about Neolab Technology, visit its [Facebook page](#).

‘Accidental Journalist’ Takes on Noncommunicable Diseases

Adanma Odefa considers herself an “accidental journalist.”

She looked forward to a career in law. But when she was 26 and just starting out as a lawyer, her father died. “My whole world shifted,” she said, when she realized he died because neither he nor his doctors recognized the symptoms of diabetes and hypertension. Later, “when I learned my dad could have lived for decades on end, I was angry. Then I turned my anger about his death into resolve,” she said.

Adanma Odefa, left, interviews the head  of the health center in Okondi, Nigeria.


Odefa said her father was a major influence on her life. “I became a lawyer because he wanted me to be one. I founded my public health nonprofit with primary focus on diabetes because he died of diabetes. I am in TV broadcasting ... my dad studied mass communications in university,” she recalled.

“My father felt that a good education as best as he could afford was the biggest debt he owed me as a father.”

With support from the German Fund, the YALI Network member and resident of Abuja started her nonprofit, which is devoted to teaching people about disease prevention.

The exposure she received through that effort brought her to the attention of producers at African Independent Television, who asked her to join a morning talk show. The show helped her reach a wide audience with public health messages. “When I saw how effective media was in sending out my message, I became a broadcaster,” the “accidental journalist” continued.

“Part of my message is to go and have a checkup,” she said, adding that her nonprofit provides, at no cost, checkups, body mass evaluations and counseling. “We talk to people about prevention, prevention, prevention,” through changes in diet, hygiene practices and lifestyle, she said. “It’s a lot cheaper to prevent than to treat.”


Odefa, right, looks on as a  representative of Nigeria’s government cuts a ribbon signaling the opening of a secondary school building outside Abuja.

Nigeria’s ministry of health invited her to become part of a committee charged with drafting a national policy on noncommunicable diseases. From there, she was appointed to a working group for

the 2011 United Nations high-level meeting on the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases, which include diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, cancers and chronic respiratory diseases.

Chronic noncommunicable diseases are steadily increasing around the world, and 80 percent of deaths attributed to them occur in developing countries, according to the U.S. National Institutes of Health.

“We used to think that public health was a wealthy population problem,” Odefa said. “But it’s not. It is becoming a bigger problem, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, where people are not necessarily wealthy but are becoming diabetic. ... Hypertension is a big killer and is on the increase.”

Odefa, right, looks on as a  representative of Nigeria’s government cuts a ribbon signaling the opening of a secondary school building outside Abuja.

Odefa also uses television to talk to women about sexual and reproductive health, explaining the causes, symptoms, risks and treatments of infections of the womb and ovaries. “For far too long, the issues of reproductive health and family planning for adolescents have been taboo. ... Consequently, pregnancy and childbirth-related complications remain the leading killer of teenage girls,” she said.

With access to television messaging, Odefa wanted to go after another problem — that of a lack of secondary education for orphans. In 2013, she organized an on-air fundraising drive that brought in enough money to build a secondary school building on the outskirts of Abuja.

And with her television station’s backing, she raised funds to upgrade a children’s clinic in Kaduna. That led to an ongoing relationship between the station and the clinic, she said.

“I almost forget I’m a lawyer,” she said. “This life of community service is so exciting.”

Of the YALI Network, Odefa said it “has proven to be a good virtual meeting point for young Africans with bright ideas. It gives me ... the feeling that I am not alone in my efforts and can always find support in others like me who are keen on promoting the common good.”

“My advice to other YALI members and potential members is to be consistent, put others first, be passionate and and be true to your efforts.”

10 Reasons to Invest in Women and Girls

A girl at the Kakenya Center for Excellence in Kenya smiles after receiving her school uniform. 

They're your mothers and your daughters, your sisters and your aunts, your cousins and your friends. There are so many reasons to invest in them, besides the fact that you love them. Here are 10:

1. **More inclusive government.** If you'd like to see less fighting among your elected officials, encourage women to run for public office. According to USAID, countries where women hold at least 30 percent of political seats are more inclusive, egalitarian and democratic.
2. **Improved public service delivery.** The next time you're frustrated by poor roads or a lack of potable water, vote for a woman. USAID reports that women's political participation increases cooperation across party and ethnic lines and government responsiveness to citizens.
3. **Greater farm production.** The UN's Food and Agricultural Organization found that by empowering women farmers with the same access to land, new technologies and capital as men, crop yields could be increased by as much as 30 percent.
4. **Fewer hungry people.** When women succeed, society succeeds. Nowhere is that more clear than in food production. In that same report, the Food and Agricultural Organization estimates that a 30 percent boost in production can reduce the number of hungry people by 150 million.
5. **Increased buying power.** As the World Bank's chief economist, Lawrence Summers said, "Investment in girls' education may well be the highest return investment available in the developing world." Each year of secondary school boosts a girl's future earning power by roughly 20 percent.
6. **Stronger economies.** Educating a girl pays dividends for her family and her country, too. According to USAID, when 10 percent more girls go to school, a country's GDP increases on average by 3 percent.
7. **Fewer child deaths.** Women who are educated are better able to take care of themselves and their children. According to UNESCO, a child born to a mother who can read is 50 percent more likely to live past age five.
8. **Less HIV/AIDS.** For UNICEF, education is essential to slowing the spread of HIV/AIDS. That's because girls who are better educated are less likely to engage in casual sex.
9. **Fewer conflicts.** When women's lives are valued, their experiences considered and their voices heard, better outcomes prevail. Through its peacekeeping operations, the UN has found that when women are included, deadly conflicts can be avoided.
10. **More lasting peace.** Women have an important role to play in driving reconciliation and reconstruction. According to the UN, including women in conflict negotiation and peacebuilding efforts can lead to more widely accepted and durable peace agreements.


[Replay: First Lady's Remarks on Women and Girls](#)

Most times, a speech suits the time, place and audience for which it was intended. But sometimes, a speech transcends that time, space and audience. First lady Michelle Obama's speech at the 2014

summit of the Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders is one of those speeches. With honesty and vigor, she addressed the need to change attitudes and beliefs about women and girls. Here are some of her remarks.

[...]

Today, I want us to talk — and I mean really talk. I want to speak as openly and honestly as possible about the issues we care about and what it means to be a leader, not just in Africa but in the world today.

First lady Michelle Obama speaks to  participants of the Presidential Summit for the Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders in Washington on July 30, 2014.

Now, one of the issues that I care deeply about is [...] girls' education. And across the globe, the statistics on this issue are heartbreaking. Right now, 62 million girls worldwide are not in school, including nearly 30 million girls in sub-Saharan Africa. And as we saw in Pakistan, where Malala Yousafzai was shot in the head by Taliban gunmen, and in Nigeria where more than 200 girls were kidnapped from their school dormitory by Boko Haram terrorists, even when girls do attend school, they often do so at great risk.

And as my husband said earlier this week, we know that when girls aren't educated, that doesn't just limit their prospects, leaving them more vulnerable to poverty, violence and disease, it limits the prospects of their families and their countries as well.

Now, in recent years, there's been a lot of talk about how to address this issue, and how we need more schools and teachers, more money for toilets and uniforms, transportation, school fees. And of course, all of these issues are critically important, and I could give a perfectly fine speech today about increasing investments in girls' education around the world.

But I said I wanted to be honest. And if I do that, we all know that the problem here isn't only about resources, it's also about attitudes and beliefs. It's about whether fathers and mothers think their daughters are as worthy of an education as their sons. It's about whether societies cling to outdated laws and traditions that oppress and exclude women, or whether they view women as full citizens entitled to fundamental rights.

So the truth is, I don't think it's really productive to talk about issues like girls' education unless we're willing to have a much bigger, bolder conversation about how women are viewed and treated in the world today. And we need to be having this conversation on every continent and in every country on this planet. And that's what I want to do today with all of you, because so many of you are already leading the charge for progress in Africa.

Now, as an African-American woman, this conversation is deeply personal to me. The roots of my family tree are in Africa. As you know, my husband's father was born and raised in Kenya — and members of our extended family still live there. I have had the pleasure of traveling to Africa a

number of times over the years, including four trips as first lady, and I have brought my mother and my daughters along with me whenever I can. So believe me, the blood of Africa runs through my veins, and I care deeply about Africa's future.

Now, the status of women in Africa is also personal to me as a woman. See, what I want you all to understand is that I am who I am today because of the people in my family — particularly the men in my family — who valued me and invested in me from the day I was born. I had a father, a brother, uncles, grandfathers who encouraged me and challenged me, protected me, and told me that I was smart and strong and beautiful.

And as I grew up, the men who raised me set a high bar for the type of men I'd allow into my life — which is why I went on to marry a man who had the good sense to fall in love with a woman who was his equal — and to treat me as such. A man who supports and reveres me, and who supports and reveres our daughters as well.


And throughout my life — understand this — every opportunity I've had, every achievement I'm proud of has stemmed from this solid foundation of love and respect. So given these experiences, it saddens and confuses me to see that too often, women in some parts of Africa are still denied the rights and opportunities they deserve to realize their potential.

Now, let's be very clear: In many countries in Africa, women have made tremendous strides. More girls are attending school. More women are starting businesses. Maternal mortality has plummeted. And more women are serving in parliaments than ever before. In fact, in some countries, more than 30 percent of legislators are women. In Rwanda, it's over 50 percent — which, by the way, is more than double the percentage of women in the U.S. Congress.

Now, these achievements represent remarkable progress. But at the same time, when girls in some places are still being married off as children, sometimes before they even reach puberty; when female genital mutilation still continues in some countries; when human trafficking, rape and domestic abuse are still too common, and perpetrators are often facing no consequences for their crimes — then we still have some serious work to do in Africa and across the globe.

And while I have great respect for cultural differences, I think we can all agree that practices like genital cutting, forced child marriage, domestic violence are not legitimate cultural practices, they are serious human rights violations and have no place in any country on this Earth. These practices have no place in our shared future, because we all know that our future lies in our people — in their talent, their ambition, their drive. And no country can ever truly flourish if it stifles the potential of its women and deprives itself of the contributions of half of its citizens.

And I know this firsthand from the history of my own country. A century ago, women in America weren't allowed to vote. Decades ago, it was perfectly legal for employers to refuse to hire women. Domestic violence was viewed not as a crime, but as a private family matter between a man and his wife.

First lady Michelle Obama hugs a  participant of the Presidential Summit for the Washington Fellowship for Young

African Leaders in Washington on July 30, 2014.

But in each generation, people of conscience stood up and rejected these unjust practices. They chained themselves to the White House gates, waged hunger strikes in prison to win the right to vote. They took their bosses to court. They spoke out about rape and fought to prosecute rapists, despite the stigma and shame. They left their abusive husbands, even when that meant winding up on the streets with their children.

And today in America, we see the results of those hard-fought battles: 60 percent of college students today are women. Women are now more than half the workforce. And in recent decades, women's employment has added nearly \$2 trillion to the U.S. economy — yes, trillion.

Now, are we anywhere near full economic, political, and domestic equality in the United States? Absolutely not. We still struggle every day with serious issues like violence against women, unequal pay. Women are still woefully underrepresented in our government and in the senior ranks of our corporations.

But slowly, generation after generation, we've been moving in the right direction because of brave individuals who were willing to risk their jobs, their reputations, and even their lives to achieve equality. And it wasn't just brave women who made these sacrifices. It was also brave men, too — men who hired women, men who passed laws to empower women, men who prosecuted other men who abused women.

So to all the men, my brothers here today, I have a simple message: We need you to shake things up. Too often, women are fighting these battles alone, but men like you, progressive men who are already ahead of the curve on women's issues, you all are critically important to solving this problem.

And that starts by doing a little introspection. And I say this not just to the 250 of you who are in the room today, but to men around the world. Men in every country need to look into their hearts and souls and ask themselves whether they truly view and treat women as their equals. And then when you all encounter men in your lives who answer no to that question, then you need to take them to task. You need to tell them that any man who uses his strength to oppress women is a coward, and he is holding back the progress of his family and his country.

Tell them that a truly strong, powerful man isn't threatened by a strong, powerful woman. Instead, he is challenged by her, he is inspired by her, he is pleased to relate to her as an equal. And I want you to keep modeling that behavior yourselves by promoting women in your companies, passing laws to empower women in your countries, and holding the same ambitious dreams for your daughters as you do for your sons.

And to the women here, my sisters [...] I want us as women to understand that oppression is not a one-way street.

See, too often, without even realizing it, we as women internalize the oppression we face in our societies by believing harmful messages about how we should look and act, particularly as women of color — messages that tell us that we're ugly or irrelevant, that we don't deserve full control over

our bodies, that we should keep our mouths shut and just do as we're told. And then, too often, we turn around and impose those same beliefs on other women and girls in our lives, including our own daughters.

For example, in countries across the globe, there are women who still support and carry out the practice of genital cutting. There are women who are still insisting on marrying off their young daughters or keeping them home from school to help with the housework.

And then there are the more subtle harms that we afflict — inflict on each other — the harm of spurning our sisters who don't conform to traditions because we're jealous or suspicious of their courage and their freedom; the harm of turning a blind eye when a woman in our community is being abused because we don't want to cause conflict with our neighbors by speaking up.

And I imagine that for some of you here today, getting your degree might have meant disobeying or disappointing your families. Maybe while you've been acing your studies and thriving in your career, you have a grandmother who has been wringing her hands because you're not yet married.

But, my sisters, you all are here today because you have found a way to overcome these challenges, and you have blossomed into powerful, accomplished women. And we need you all to help others do the same.


All of us, men and women on every continent, we all need to identify these problems in ourselves and in our communities, and then commit to solving them. And I say this to you not just as lawyers and activists and business leaders, but as current and future parents. Because as a mother myself, I can tell you that this is where change truly happens. With the behavior we model, with our actions and inactions, every day, we as parents shape the values of the next generation.

For example, my parents never had the chance to attend university, but they had the courage and foresight to push me to get the best education I could. And they weren't threatened by the prospect of me having more opportunities than they had — just the opposite. They were thrilled.

And that's what should drive us all: the hope of raising the next generation to be stronger, smarter and bolder than our generation. And that is exactly the kind of work that so many of you are already doing in your families and your communities, which is why I'm so proud of you.

[...]

This is where Africa's future lies — with those women-run businesses, with those girls attending university, and with leaders like you who are making those dreams possible. And the question today is how all of you and young people like you will steer Africa's course to embrace that future.

First lady Michelle Obama speaks to 
selected participants of the Presidential
Summit for the Washington Fellowship for
Young African Leaders in Washington on July
30, 2014, during a roundtable discussion.

Because ultimately, that's what leadership is really about. It's not just about holding degrees or

holding elected office. And it's not about preserving our own power or continuing traditions that oppress and exclude.

Leadership is about creating new traditions that honor the dignity and humanity of every individual. Leadership is about empowering all of our people — men, women, boys and girls — to fulfill every last bit of their God-given potential. And when we commit to that kind of leadership across the globe, that is when we truly start making progress on girls' education. Because that's when families in small villages around the world will demand equal opportunities for their daughters. They won't wait. That's when countries will willingly and generously invest in sending their girls to school, because they'll know how important it is.

And we all know the ripple effects we can have when we give our girls a chance to learn. We all know that girls who are educated earn higher wages. They're more likely to stand up to discrimination and abuse. They have healthier children who are more likely to attend school themselves.

So no matter where you all work, no matter what issue you focus on — whether it's health or microfinance, human rights or clean energy — women's equality must be a central part of your work. It must. Because make no mistake about it, the work of transforming attitudes about women, it now falls on your shoulders. And it's up to you all to embrace the future. [...]

And I know this won't be easy. I know that you will face all kinds of obstacles and resistance — you already have. But when you get tired or frustrated, when things seem hopeless and you start thinking about giving up, I want you to remember the words of the man whom your fellowship is now named — and I know these words have been spoken many times. As Madiba once said, "It always seems impossible until it is done." And I, oh, I know the truth of those words from my own history and from the history of my country.

My ancestors came here in chains. My parents and grandparents knew the sting of segregation and discrimination. Yet I attended some of the best universities in this country. I had career opportunities beyond my wildest dreams. And today, I live in the White House, a building — but we must remember, we live in a home that was constructed by slaves.


Today, I watch my daughters — two beautiful African-American girls — walking our dogs in the shadow of the Oval Office. And today, I have the privilege of serving and representing the United States of America across the globe.

So my story and the story of my country is the story of the impossible getting done. And I know that can be your story and that can be Africa's story too. But it will take new energy, it will take new ideas, new leadership from young people like you. That is why we brought you here today.

We've done this because we believe in Africa, and we believe in all of you. And understand we are filled with so much hope and so many expectations for what you will achieve. You hold the future of your continent in your hands, and I cannot wait to see everything you will continue to accomplish in the years ahead.

Women and Girls: A Sound Investment

Some of you have asked, “Why should we focus on women and girls? Why shouldn’t we focus on empowering everyone — women and girls, men and boys?” It’s a good question. The answer is because a gap exists between the opportunities and resources available to men and boys and those available to women and girls.


For every year of secondary schooling a  girl receives, her earning power increases by 15-25 percent

According to the [U.S. Agency for International Development](#) (USAID), 1 in 3 girls around the world will experience gender-based violence in their lifetimes, 1 in 5 girls in the developing world who enroll in primary school never finish, and 1 in 7 girls in the developing world are forced into marriage before their 15th birthdays.

A girl’s situation does not improve with age. According to the [World Health Organization](#), complications during pregnancy and childbirth are the second leading cause of death for girls aged 15-19 globally. According to the [Food and Agriculture Organization](#) (FAO), women own just between 10 and 20 percent of the world’s land, despite making up more than 40 percent of its agricultural labor force. And according to [USAID](#), women-owned enterprises make up as little as 10 percent of all businesses in Africa.

Whether in the classroom, the hospital or the office, women and girls face challenges unique to their gender. The good news is that even a small investment in a woman or a girl can have a huge return.

When Women Succeed, Society Succeeds


Women make up nearly 64 percent of  Rwanda’s Chamber of Deputies and nearly 39 percent of Rwanda’s Senate. Many credit women’s political participation in Rwanda with helping the country recover from its civil war.

Investing in women and girls means taking actions — big and small — to bring about gender equality. It means changing society’s attitudes and behaviors toward women and girls. It means rethinking the roles and responsibilities of women and girls. It means creating a world where women and girls enjoy the same human rights and have access to the same opportunities as men and boys.

Investing in women and girls isn’t just the right thing to do, it’s the smart thing to do. Here are some benefits investing in women and girls can have:

Stronger democracies. Women's participation in politics has tangible gains for democracy. According to USAID, countries where women hold at least 30 percent of political seats are more inclusive, egalitarian and democratic. Not only that, it also found that higher rates of women's political participation are associated with lower levels of government corruption.

Improved public service delivery. Including women in the political space has benefits for citizens, too, because women are more likely to invest in the public good than their male counterparts. In India, for example, USAID found that political districts with more female representatives enjoyed greater community benefits such as investments in drinking water facilities and roadways.

By including women in the peacekeeping  process, countries ensure more lasting and just outcomes following conflict.

Enhanced food security. The FAO estimates that if women had the same access to productive resources as men, they could increase yields on their farms by 20-30 percent. That would be enough to feed an additional 150 million people.

More lasting peace. When women play a role in conflict situations, they become drivers of reconciliation and reconstruction. Evidence shows that including women in conflict-related decisionmaking and peace-building efforts can lead to more durable, comprehensive and widely accepted peace agreements.

Greater economic growth. According to USAID, when 10 percent more girls go to school, a country's GDP will grow on average by 3 percent. And a girl's individual earning power increases by 15-25 percent for every year of secondary schooling she receives.

These are just a few ways investing in women and girls enables a community, a country and a continent to flourish.

What's Next?

As Secretary Kerry said, "No country can succeed unless every citizen is empowered to contribute to its future. And no peace can endure if women are not afforded a central role."

So over the next month, commit to investing in women and girls. It can be something as simple as reading a book to your younger sister or as elaborate as hosting a series of financial literacy workshops for women in your community. The goal is to act and, through your actions, bring about a more equal, prosperous and secure world for everyone.

Think of the impact the YALI Network could make if all 130,000 of you act.


Servant Leadership: A bygone era on the African continent?

"It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead."

These are the words of Robert K. Greenleaf, the man behind our modern conception of servant leadership.

Today, servant leadership is rare. Modern politicians have proved that the social contract has been breached. These leaders, or rather rulers, have placed their interests above all else.

The Social Contract

Rumbidzai Dube, a 2014 Mandela  Washington Fellow, calls for a revival of servant leaders.

The philosophies of Jean Jacques Rousseau — a proponent of the social contract theory — have informed the legitimacy of political authority for centuries. Rousseau argued that government came into being to right wrongs such as the economic and social inequalities precipitated by civilization. He claimed these inequalities robbed human beings of their natural state, one characterized by freedom and dignity.

Rousseau suggested that to recreate the balance of nature, where freedom existed and inequalities did not, man made two pacts: *pactum unionis* and *pactum subjectionis*. Under *pactum unionis*, human beings agreed to coexist peacefully in return for the guaranteed protection of their lives and property. Under *pactum subjectionis*, they ceded their rights to an authority with the power to enforce the contract. This meant giving power to the authority to govern them to their benefit, to represent their interests and to protect their freedoms.

This theory assumed that those vested with the power would respect the submission of individual wills to the collective will, and that the agreement was between free and equal persons.

A Different Approach

Rousseau's theory would work perfectly if those given the power to govern would be driven by the desire to serve, and to serve first.

Humility, selflessness, empathy, foresight — these are some of the qualities of a servant leader.

Servant leaders are deeply committed to identifying and fulfilling the needs of all those they serve. They recognize the invaluable contributions of every member of society.

Servant leaders walk in the shoes of those they lead, for their comfort and even existence comes secondary to that of their people. This principle is embodied in one of Nelson Mandela's statements

at the Rivonia Trial:

“During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.”

Servant leaders do not stir conflict to their benefit. They do not take action to entrench authoritarianism. They are persuasive, convincing others to work together toward a common good. They reaffirm others, nurturing the gifts and abilities they see in those they lead. They recognize their own limits and harness the strength that comes from many different people and many different skill sets.

I have learned the value of servant leadership in the work that I do: championing the rights of women, monitoring parliaments, improving rights literacy. This work is not about me, what I want or what I think. It is for the greater good.

The core is to serve, to do good, to enhance lives, to encourage. Anything less is not servant leadership.


Rumbidzai Dube is a social justice advocate who is passionate about using the written word to inform, educate and transform societies. A 2014 Mandela Washington Fellow from Zimbabwe, Dube currently works as a legal researcher for the Research and Advocacy Unit, a local nonprofit organization that advocates for a Zimbabwean society where citizens are aware of their power and demand good governance. She holds law degrees from the University of Zimbabwe and the University of Pretoria. She is a member of the Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association and the Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights.

To Get Change, Vote

“Make sure you’re civically engaged and you vote for people that you want. Change doesn’t happen overnight. Change starts with you.”

-Chedi Ngulu, founder of MegaMark Communications

African youth want change. But to get change, they must be active participants in civil society.

Macon Philips moderates the 
#YALICHAT

That's what two 2014 Mandela Washington Fellows and YALI Network members who each organized a voter education campaign said during a live webchat hosted by Macon Phillips, head of the State Department's Bureau of International Information Programs.

Phillips called the next two years "exciting" for Africa, as more than 20 countries on the continent will hold presidential elections.


"It's an incredible opportunity for change and for civic engagement and for organizing young people to be more engaged in their community," he said.

Sobel Ngom, founder of the Social Change Factory in Dakar, Senegal, and Chedi Ngulu, founder of MegaMark Communications in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, joined Phillips to talk about their experiences educating voters and to respond to questions submitted online by YALI Network members.

Ngom said that during the run-up to Senegal's 2012 presidential election, his encounters with other youths found them uninterested in the election process. So he decided to use his expertise in communications and marketing to form an information campaign that "could turn around the situation." His campaign targets youth ages 18-24 and uses a combination of social media and hip-hop music videos and concerts to deliver messages about the importance of voting and civic engagement.

When asked about the best way to reach audiences, Ngulu replied that his campaign relies heavily on social media for its increasing penetration into the population and for its cost effectiveness. He said money saved using social media instead of advertising in traditional media can be used in activities on the ground.

Ngom also makes extensive use of social media and technology to communicate with voters. His team developed an online application that teaches computer users about the voting process and provides descriptions of candidates. His team reaches other people around the country in-person and through printed voter-information materials. He said his campaign has grown to 150,000 followers online and 200,000 followers who do not use the Internet.

Sobel Ngom answers a question from 
the YALI Network

Phillips, Ngom and Ngulu all stressed that technology is only a tool for achieving your objectives. Anyone wishing to create campaigns and initiatives of this type must have an effective strategy to reach the target constituencies and spur them to action.

Responding to a question about how to engage unemployed youth in the democratic process instead of letting them fall into "the trap of violence," Ngulu said that his campaign addresses the need for civic engagement as a violence-prevention measure:

"If people realize that violence won't take them to where they want to go, they will be involved in civic engagement."

Ngom stressed that “the first thing we can do to support the democratic system is to vote. Then it’s to encourage people we know to vote. Then, identify the factors that keep people from voting and work on a solution,” he said.

“The challenge is to find a way to convince young people that if they want to lead another life, maybe the vote is a way to get there,” Ngom said.

Addressing a comment about a general lack of interest in voting, Ngom said that in much of Africa older people were not taught “how to be citizens,” so they tell young people that “there is no point in voting.”

To counter that, he said, “we have to build citizens.” He added that his other major effort — the Social Change Factory — is helping youth build a sense of belonging to their nation and gain a sense of citizen responsibility.

Ngom added that he wants the Social Change Factory to become stronger and eventually gain the government’s financial or moral support. He wants “to make citizenship something fun, something cool,” he said. He wants “to build a long-term citizen.”

Ngulu also believes that encouraging citizens to be civically engaged is what will lead to change: “We tell young people to make sure you’re civically engaged and you vote for people that you want. Change doesn’t happen overnight,” he said. “Change starts with you, and casting your vote for people who will deliver in your best interests” will lead to the change you want.

“If you look at some frustrations people have — they do not think their vote will make a difference. So they don’t have a chance to make change,” Ngulu continued. However, Phillips reminded the audience of one of his favorite quotes from Obama:

“A good leader ... says ‘believe in yourself’ versus ‘believe in me.’”

Learn More:

[Recording of Webcast](#)

Sobel’s [Podcast](#) and [Blog Post](#)

Chedi’s [Podcast](#) and [Blog Post](#)

[A Conversation on Servant Leadership](#)

After more than 30 years of work in the corporate sector, Pat Falotico’s heart called her to service. In 2014, she left IBM Corporation and joined the Robert K. Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership


as its chief executive officer (CEO). Below, she describes the concept of service leadership in business and how YALI Network members might implement the practice in their daily lives.

Question:

What is servant leadership, and how is it different from traditional leadership?

Pat Falotico:

I first heard of servant leadership from a wonderful leader here in Atlanta who is the CFO [chief financial officer] of Home Depot, Carol Tome. She described servant leadership as an inverted pyramid, where the CEO is at the bottom focusing on enabling his or her followers, the employees and ultimately the customers the organization serves.

As a testament to his leadership during  the U.S. civil rights movement, Martin Luther King Jr. is honored before an Atlanta Hawks basketball game.

[Management expert] Robert K. Greenleaf gave the term “servant leadership” to this practice in 1970 when he wrote the essay *The Servant as Leader*. What he talked about was being a servant first, being committed to helping others. So servant leadership is an “other-ish” versus a selfish motivation.

Greenleaf goes on to say that it’s not just having a servant’s heart but also choosing to lead. Servant-leaders say, “I choose to help others in a meaningful way so that I can ensure their highest priority needs are met.”

Servant leadership is not soft; it is not without accountability. Because I cannot meet the highest priority needs of those whom I serve if I don’t deliver outstanding business results. I do not provide for their most basic needs if they can’t get a paycheck.

Servant leadership is also built on empathy. It’s accepting individuals for who they are, but not necessarily accepting that their performance is always adequate. I can value you as a person, but if you show up for work every single day late, if you’re not engaged in your work, I probably need to understand why because that effort, that outcome is not acceptable. But the person is always accepted.

By definition, you can see how servant leadership differs from traditional power structures. It’s a people-building versus a people-using model.

Question:

Give us an example of someone who has exhibited servant leadership.

Falotico:

Nelson Mandela is a great example, given what he endured and how he was able to bring about the end of apartheid. It wasn’t in his own self-interest, but he gave of himself to enable others. He led by example.


You also have Martin Luther King Jr. and all that he did with the civil rights movement here in the United States, focusing on the right to vote and all that we needed to do to desegregate our country and provide equal opportunity for all. He and his family endured such sacrifice. But he focused on others, so that they could be lifted up.

What I love about these examples is that it's a journey. In our humanness, we make mistakes. We're not always in line with our purest vision of ourselves. But servant leadership is a simple commitment to care for and support others, to do something bigger than ourselves.

Question:

Why should YALI Network members adopt the principles of servant leadership?

Falotico:

In the United States, January 19 is  Martin Luther King Day, a time for community service. These volunteers, for example, are helping a Florida secondary school convert its books to a new sorting system.

First of all, because it works. You get results. There's a group of companies called the "Firms of Endearment" that practice servant leadership. Maybe they don't call it servant leadership, but they really do practice it.

And it is those companies that outperform their peers.

And it is so much more fulfilling.

But it's not easy. Servant leadership takes time. Servant leadership takes effort. And servant leadership forces us to really question our values about others. And because of the hard work, people sometimes don't want to put it in. But for those that do, they see it's worth it. They see the results.

Question:

What can a YALI Network member do today to start implementing the principles of servant leadership?

Falotico:

Get the [essay](#). Read it and reflect upon it. Really focus on the self-awareness aspects of it. Who am I? How am I perceived? How do I present myself? Am I authentic? Am I committed to others? And really understand.

So many people say, "Yes, I am committed to others, I am a servant leader," and what they mean by that is "I volunteer and do good things in the community." And you can volunteer and do good things in the community and not be a servant leader.

There are skills and capabilities of a servant leader that you can work on: listening, empathy, self awareness are three of the big ones that people can work on.

Question:


Anything else you'd like to share with the YALI Network?

Falotico:

Yes, in a different essay, Greenleaf talks about how this change will happen. And he talks about the reality that certain generations may be so fixed in the way that they operate that they're not going to be able to bring about this change themselves — that it will be from inside, at other levels within the organization. He talks about the opportunity and the responsibility to motivate young people to see that there's a better way, and have them bring about change in these institutions. So, make sure YALI Network members know that we're counting on them to change the institutions that they enter from the inside.

To learn more about the Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership you can visit its [website](#) or join its communities on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#).

Afrobarometer Tracks Opinion and Democratic Trends

Peter Mutharika won Malawi's  presidency in 2014. Surveys show Malawian women are less interested in politics than Malawian men.

Afrobarometer is an African-led, nonpartisan research network that conducts public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, economic conditions and related issues across more than 30 countries in Africa. Since its 1999 inception, Afrobarometer has conducted six rounds of surveys. Afrobarometer selects nationally representative samples of participants and conducts face-to-face interviews in the languages of its respondents.

Afrobarometer results are widely quoted in the African media and considered to be one of the richest, most objective and most comprehensive data sources available from diverse African nations.

Social scientists from across Africa collaborate to produce Afrobarometer research. Several African institutions provide support and coordination, including the Center for Democratic Development in Ghana, the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation in South Africa, the Institute for Development Studies at the University of Nairobi in Kenya, and the Institute for Empirical Research in Political Economy in Benin. Michigan State University and the University of Cape Town provide technical

support to the network.

Funding comes from an array of donors, including the U.S. Agency for International Development and the World Bank.

Summaries of some recent Afrobarometer survey findings are cited below. For a complete view of the network's research, see Afrobarometer.org.

Nigeria heads for closest election on record

An Afrobarometer survey conducted in December 2014 revealed what researchers called a highly competitive political field. The results, released before the recent government decision to postpone the voting, also found uncertainty about the possible outcome of the election and the prospects for a credible and peaceful voting process. While most Nigerians look forward to voting and believe that the Independent National Electoral Commission is prepared, many also expressed uncertainty in Afrobarometer surveys about the likely integrity of the vote count.

Based on its findings, Afrobarometer reports that the race between the ruling People's Democratic Party and its main challenger, the All Progressives Congress, is too close to call.

Do men and women have different voter preferences? If so, why?

An Afrobarometer research paper released in 2015 contrasts male and female views on political engagement. Gender quotas to increase women's representation, employed in a number of African countries, are often motivated by the assumption that men and women have different policy preferences. In contrast to this assumption, Afrobarometer researchers found that gender differences in preferences are quite small on average, but vary significantly across both policy domains and countries.

In Malawi, women lag in political participation; support for women's leadership declines.

Malawian women are less likely to be involved in political discussions, according to a 2014 Afrobarometer survey, and show less interest in public affairs than their male counterparts. The researchers contrast this finding with the national experience of female leadership from 2012 to 2014, when President Joyce Banda led the country.

Women in Malawi are also less likely than men to attend a political rally or campaign meeting or to engage in candidate advocacy, according to the polling of some 2,400 adult Malawians. The Afrobarometer results unveiled in February 2015 also showed a sharp decline in public support for women's political leadership.

Kenyans and Tanzanians are surveyed on the formation of an East African Federation

Since 2013, some political leaders in the five countries of the East African Community — Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi — have promoted the benefits of an East African Federation.

An Afrobarometer survey finds that many citizens in the two largest member states are not convinced that integration will lead to promised benefits for their countries. Public-opinion surveys of Kenyans and Tanzanians conducted in 2011–2012 examined attitudes toward the potential impact of an integrated region. Researchers questioned participants on the availability of jobs, managing conflict, controlling corruption, strengthening democracy and controlling prices. On none of these five issues did a majority of Tanzanians say that a federation would have a positive impact, and on only two issues — availability of jobs and controlling prices — did a majority of Kenyans expect improvement through a federation.

One key finding from the report released in January 2015 shows that sizable minorities of respondents in both countries actually think democracy and corruption controls might degrade in the formation of a regional federation.

The complete versions of these reports and many others are available at Afrobarometer.org. The organization has conducted opinion surveys in more than 35 African nations in its 15-year history in pursuit of its motto, “Let the people have their say.”

[Tanzanian Plans to Inspire Youth to Vote](#)

Join Chedi on the video #YALICHAT Engaging Youth in the Democratic Process on Wednesday, February 25th at 1400 UTC.

Chedi Ngulu. Photo Courtesy: 
State Dept./Dartmouth

Chedi Ngulu has big plans for young people in Tanzania. The 2014 Mandela Washington Fellow and YALI Network member in Dar es Salaam wants to use popular music and technology to inspire the new generation of Tanzanians to participate in their country’s upcoming constitutional referendum and general elections and to help build long-term and sustainable democracy and peace.

To do that, Ngulu will implement #PigaChata (formerly #AHADI), a voter education and turnout campaign. Through the campaign, he wants Tanzania’s youth to sign a pledge that they will “vote responsibly in 2015” for both the referendum and elections. They can either sign the pledge in-person or online, Ngulu says.

The head of MegaMark Communications has a passion for communications, media, business and music. Already he has led several major commercial and social marketing campaigns for companies, government and international organizations and has organized major events like concerts and conferences.

#PigaChata, slang for “leave a mark,” is modeled after the successful “Rock the Vote” campaign in

the United States launched in 1990 to motivate American youth to participate in the electoral process. Rock the Vote is the largest nonprofit and nonpartisan organization in the United States driving youth to the polls.

#PigaChata will target those between ages 18 and 25, focusing on four major cities: Dar es Salaam, Arusha, Mwanza and Zanzibar. It will recruit well-known and up-and-coming hip-hop artists to collaborate on a signature campaign song that promotes responsible civic engagement, with a focus on registering and voting. All recordings will be pushed for play on radio and television. College debates, town hall meetings and grass-roots engagements will expand on campaign awareness.

Digital media makes one of the most important components of this campaign. Social media — especially Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube — will be used intensely, and thanks to U.S. African Development Foundation (USADF) funding, #PigaChata is working on a voter education and information mobile app that will also feature an interactive SMS platform.

Ngulu also has plans for a series of free, public concerts in each of the target areas with artists touring local schools and hosting town forums to engage youth. “The concerts, music and art competition events will draw out people so that we can sign up large groups at once,” he says.

Ngulu notes that 65 percent of Tanzanians are under age 24, and there are over 6.6 million Tanzanians between ages 18 and 24. “This age cohort alone has the potential to determine the next president of Tanzania,” he says.

The campaign will also reach young people who are not old enough to vote, Ngulu adds. These youth “will be impacted by the messaging, allowing us to plant seeds in future voters,” he says.

A survey of youth after 2010 elections, during which voter participation was nearly half of what it was in 2005, reinforced the need for a strong outreach campaign “that both educates young Tanzanians about their voting rights and the registration process and that also inspires them to be more engaged,” according to the businessman.

He notes that the campaign will also support the goals of the national and Zanzibar-region strategies for growth and the reduction of poverty, greater citizen participation in democratic governance, and improving democratic institutions and national unity.
